

## **FREDERICK COUNTY COMMISSION ON AGING**

December 11, 2017

Frederick Memorial Hospital, Crestwood campus, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor

**Members Present:** Elizabeth Chung, Marcy Gouge, Cindy Kokoski, Thomas Lawler, Ann McDermott, Thea Ihlig-Ruff, Lori Stup, Sandra Wastler, Marva Younger

**Members Excused:** Dianne Lewis, Chairperson, County Council Vice President M.C. Keegan-Ayer, Mayor Randy McClement

**Staff Present:** Kitty Devilbiss, Carolyn True

**Staff Excused:** Sue Ramsburg, Monica Grant

**Guests:** Mary Beachley, Veronica Lowe (Transit), Scott Betts, Frederick County Video Services, Eileen McLaughlin, Right at Home, Kelly Bongard, Wages for Hope

Tom Lawler, Vice-Chair of the Commission called the meeting to order at 1:00 PM. He welcomed all, asked everyone to introduce themselves, and read the mission of the Commission on Aging.

There was no action on the agenda. Upon a motion by Marcy Gouge, seconded by Sandi Wastler, the minutes of the November 13, 2017 meeting were approved as written.

### **Presentations**

#### **Wags for Hope**

Tom introduced Kelly Bongard, president of Wags for Hope. This non-profit organization which started in 2006, provides volunteers and their trained pets (usually dogs and some cats) who visit nursing home and assisted living facilities. The visit brings pleasure to the residents and they look forward to seeing the animal and handler. Today, Kelly brought her dog, Thor, to the meeting. Kelly and Thor, a Bernese Mountain dog, along with 75 other "teams" visit residents who reside in long term care (a team is a handler and a pet). Residents look forward to the visits and enjoy reminiscing about the animals they had in their lives. The program has a Frederick County focus although some facilities outside the County are part of the program. Wags for Hope visits schools like Hood College during exam week to help students de-stress during an otherwise stressful time. Other organizations where Wags for Hope visits is the county public library system and Frederick County Public Schools. Their participation in the READ (Reading Education Assistance Dogs) program gives students a chance to improve their reading and literacy skills by reading to the dog. The pets in the program are not considered service animals. They are therapy animals who want to be petted. The organization receives more requests for visits than they have volunteers.

There is no charge for a visit. Presently, the teams do not go to private homes since they may not know the individuals who reside there.

In order for a pet to participate, the team must successfully pass a Level 1 evaluation which includes basic obedience, the handler's understanding of the organization's policies and procedures, and an evaluation of how the dog reacts to a scenario that the dog might encounter in a public setting (i.e. sirens, wheelchairs, people). Wags for Hope also has teams with an additional certification (Level 2) to

enable them to make weekly visits to the hospital. It is a more difficult screening with greater requirements.

A large expense for the organization is insurance and a local winery hosts a fundraising event called "Howl-O-Wine" which helps with some of the expenses. They are always looking for donations. Their website address is [www.WagsForHope.org](http://www.WagsForHope.org).

### **Caregiver Video**

Scott Betts from the County's video services unit, presented a video he and the Business Task Force have been working on for the last year. The members watched the shorter version (11 minutes) of the video in which a caregiver discusses the dual role she has in caring for two of her grandchildren while a third grandchild receives a lifesaving treatment in Delaware. At the same time, the caregiver is also assisting her father in the care of her mother in western Maryland. The target audience of this video is employers who may be unaware of the personal challenges their employees encounter as a caregiver. Caregivers can also view the video and understand that they are not alone in the caregiving journey because help, the caregiver support program at the Department of Aging, can be a "lifeline."

The video will be available on the Department of Aging's website, on YouTube and will air on the county's access channel 19. There is also a 15 minute version that provides greater, in-depth information for viewers. Scott and Kathryn Nicaloto, the caregiver who shared her story on the video, were commended for their work as were others who offered their time including COA member Elizabeth Chung and Christina Forbes at Daybreak.

Other suggestions for ways to get the video into the public's hands and especially those of employers are welcome.

### Nominations

Tom asked for nominations from the floor for Chair and Vice Chair for the Commission on Aging. None were offered, and Tom presented the slate which will be voted on at the January 2018 meeting. Sandi Wastler has volunteered to serve as Chair and Thea Ruff has offered to serve as Vice-Chair.

### Affordable Housing Council update

Marva Younger, the COA liaison to the Affordable Housing Council (AHC) and also a member of the AHC, announced that the AHC will host a housing fair on June 16, 2018 at the ARC of Frederick County. The agenda for the day is still being confirmed but she is hopeful that there will be a topic on aging in place for seniors. The AHC meets on December 12 at which more information will be shared. Thea suggested that a topic could also include multi-generational housing. She said that seniors thrive when they are surrounded by people of all ages.

Lori Stup commented on the recent newspaper article in which a Woodsboro family described their frustrations with county zoning as a result of their acquisition of a tiny house which they had planned to add to their backyard. Zoning policies currently in place do not allow the structure and it would be treated as a separate structure, subject to all the fees. It would have been better for the family to

construct an addition to their house. This is a nationwide issue and new legislation might be needed if the concept of a tiny house is to proceed. This could be a discussion topic at the February housing panel meeting.

## **End of Year Reports**

### Aging in Place Subcommittee

Thea Ruff stated that the committee finalized the power point slides and created 7 self-evaluation questionnaires for people to complete when the committee met with community senior groups including Walkersville and Brunswick. To date, the top 3 questionnaires that people took with them were about transportation, housing and wellness. The committee meets with Thurmont seniors at the senior center on December 12. The committee is anxious to raise awareness with community leaders about senior issues in their communities.

Thea noted that the Senior Support committee of the Local Health Improvement Plan (LHIP) made a presentation in October on the 3 areas the committee has been working. They include:

- Transportation - faith based organizations were surveyed to learn about the transportation options they offer and what medical transportation options are available in the community
- Communication – this subcommittee has been exploring how to market senior services and ensure there is a central point of entry to senior services
- Aging in Place – this subcommittee has been gathering information to help seniors age in place.

Thea noted that some people on the committee are teaching classes at the Institute in Learning and Retirement (ILR) at FCC on how to successfully age in place.

### Business Task Force

Tom Lawler stated that the committee worked on the caregiver video that was viewed earlier in the meeting. It will also be shared at the ESPC meeting on January 11 to which all are welcome. Jobs for seniors has also been a focus of the committee for the last year and the members have met with staff from Workforce Services and IHire to gather information. Kelli Ackiewicz from the ILR also attended the meetings along with Meg Timmons from the Society for Human Resource Management, and has helped create 2 sessions on what seniors should expect if they decide to re-enter the workforce. Among the topics to be presented on March 13 and March 26, 2018 will be the changing dynamics in the work place, how income might affect Social Security benefits, and resume and interviewing skills.

### Health and Wellness

Mary Beachley stated that in 2016 the group crafted the goals for 2017. The primary goal was a falls prevention campaign as statistics show this is the number one cause of injury to seniors. Balance training is an important component but unfortunately, what is missing is the change in behavior by older adults. Flyers were created to address individual causes and each month had a different flyer. There was also an article about falls prevention in the *Senior Living* magazine. While the group started out strong, some members have dropped off for a variety of reasons so there is uncompleted work to do.

### Public Policy

Ann McDermott stated that her committee has been monitoring state and federal legislation. She has talked with Congressman VanHollen's office as well as with Delegate Karen Lewis Young and Senator Ron Young. Ann noted that the federal tax reform bill might have an effect on seniors' health care and caregivers could see some changes as well. She plans to work with Carolyn True to advocate on legislation for the upcoming year.

Upon a motion by Sandi Wastler, seconded by Elizabeth Chung, the Commission members voted to approve the subcommittee reports.

There was no public comment.

Carolyn True offered thanks on behalf of the Department to Tom Lawler for his leadership and advocacy as the outgoing Vice-Chair of the Commission. Although not in attendance, she also noted Dianne Lewis' commitment to the COA.

Sandi Wastler requested that the schedule for the confirmed COA meetings be added to the website. Carolyn will ensure that the confirmed meetings with speakers, January-April 2018, are on the COA webpage.

The meeting adjourned at 2:25 PM.

Respectfully,

Carolyn B. True

Director

On behalf of Sue Ramsburg, Recording Secretary